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## **GROWTH OF AUTHORITY OVER CONQUERED REGION: POLITICO-CULTURAL STUDY OF BANARAS DURING SULTANATE PERIOD**

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Though Banaras has been the most venerated site for Hindu pilgrimage, it developed after its conquests under the Ghurids as a centre for Muslim mysticism as well. Through out the Delhi Sultanate period, Banaras remained an important city for both Hindus and Muslims. The rulers extended patronage to the institutions of both religions. Though Banaras was divided into four localities, the intermingling of Hindus and Muslims brought about a respite for low caste Hindus. The governors appointed to Banaras by the Sultans were on the most part, cultured and learned, patronizing schools and monasteries of both religions. Since in Banaras, the Sufi orders were dominant, and the orthodox ulama did not interfere much, a syncretic culture developed under the Sultanate, led respectively by Vallabhadarya and Kabir.

**Key Words:** Sufi, Bhakti, Vernacular, Syncretic

By the closing decades of the twelfth century, the Ghurids expanded their sway in the northern regions of India. Delhi, as the new capital of Turkish rulers, served as launching base for further incursions into the deep Gangetic basin. Their eastward incursion resulted in fall of Kol (Aligarh) and Banaras.

The ancient city Banaras has been one of the holiest cities of India. The Turkish political hold over Banaras started in the mid-eleventh century with the Ghaznavid expedition.<sup>1</sup> However, the Turkish influence further increased in the reign of Sultan Mu'izzuddin bin Sam under the able commander Qutbuddin Aibek. With the establishment of Turkish political

power, Banaras soon turned into a Muslim cultural centre with the coming of Sufis and learned men from different parts of Central Asia during the Sultanate period. The local governors and officials patronized not only Muslim scholars, rather they extended equal facilities to the non-Muslims talent too. This paper seeks to highlight the cultural outcome after the establishment of political power over Banaras during the Sultanate period. In 1194 A.D., Mu'izzuddin Bin Sam advanced from Ghazni against Jaichandra Gahadvala, Raja of Kannauj and Banaras, who had been a former ally of Rai Pithora. Qutbuddin Aibek, the then commander of India, had already subjugated Kol (Aligarh), thus he joined his master Sultan Mu'izzuddin with a large army of 50,000 mounted soldiers clad in 'armour and coats of mail'. Aibek and Izzuddin Hussain Kharmil commanded the vanguard, consisting of one thousand cavalry. A fierce battle ensued in the vicinity of Chandawar and the Rajputs had nearly carried the day when Jaichandra, who was seated on an elephant, received a deadly wound from a chance arrow. His death resulted in the defeat of the Rajputs. Jaichandra's forces were over thrown by the royal forces. Immense booty, including three hundred elephants, was captured by the Muslim forces. They took possession of the fortress of Asni (in *pargana* Mahaich, district Varanasi), where the royal treasure was deposited, and then proceeded towards Banaras which was considered as one of the central cities of Hindustan. A large number of elephants, even one white also, was acquired alongwith vast amount of booty. As usual mosques were constructed and the foundation of religion was laid. Rais and chiefs of the regions offered their allegiance to the Sultan. The government was then conferred on one of the most celebrated and exalted servants of the state to dispense justice.<sup>2</sup> According to Minhaj it was made a military division and Malik Husamuddin Ughul Bek was appointed as the *muqti* (commander) of Banaras and Awadh divisions. Garrisons were placed in Banaras, Asni and other occupied towns.<sup>3</sup>

After the conquest of Banaras, Mu'izzuddin returned to Ghazni and left Qutbuddin as his deputy in India.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps Aibek had not fully consolidated his position of Kol, thus, he turned towards that town in order to stabilize his position over there. Although the whole of Gahadavala kingdom could not be brought under control, but the Banaras expedition provided an opportunity for establishing military stations at many places, including Banaras and Asni.<sup>5</sup> Although no historical evidence is available about the names of the early Muslim governors of Banaras yet the local traditions have listed Saiyid Jamaluddin as in charge of Banaras. He is believed to be the founder of Jamaluddin pura *mohalla* of Banaras.<sup>6</sup> In the meantime Aibek's hold over Banaras had loosened and he had to



occupy it for the second time in 1197 A.D.<sup>7</sup> It is believed that Saiyid Jamaluddin was succeeded by Muhammad Baqar (founder of *mohallah* Baqarabad and so called innovator of a special bread *Baqarkhani*) during the reign of Aibek as the governor (*wali*) of Banaras.<sup>8</sup>

After the Ghurid conquest over Gahadavala in 1198-1199 A.D., members of the Gahadavala ruling lineage and *ranakas* continued to reside in the vicinity of the Mu'izzi camps. Three inscriptions (ranging from 1197 to 1217 A.D.) found in the neighbourhood of Banaras and Jaunpur, the eastern portion of Gahadavalas, preserves the reaction of the local elites to Ghurid and later Sultanate intrusion. Of these, two inscriptions indicate that at the initial stage, the institutional process of royal grants and rituals recognition of authority suffered no dislocation with the death of the Gahadavala ruler and instead of Jaichandra the inscriptions recorded the name of his son Harishchandra as the new ruler, ruling over Banaras and nearby territories.<sup>9</sup> However, in another inscription dated 1217 A.D. the name of the ruler was absent, but the principal military subordinates, the *ranaka* and the *rautta*, continued to occupy rights to their property which the latter mortgaged for loans.<sup>10</sup> The participants in the mortgage agreements, including the four *rautta* witnesses, seem to have been unaware of any change in customary traditions governing fiscal obligations and had enough confidence in the future to participate in long term financial transactions. They pledged cultivable lands in exchange for monetary loan, utterly oblivious of any possible threat of military expulsion from Sultanate commanders in the neighbouring cantonments of Banaras and Kara. Nor was their confidence misplaced. Even ten years later, socially well placed individuals within the erstwhile Gahadavala domains were still concluding similar mortgage agreements between *rautta* and three Brahmins, but with a significant difference of recognizing Sultan Iltutmish as the paramount ruler of the land.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, there were efforts to ground the new regimes within an older semiotics of power and respect. Now the Ghurid coins sometimes carried the image of Shiva's revered vehicle, the Nandi Bull, and the visage of the Rajput horseman with a lance. An even better example of continuity in signilla was evident to the local audience from the gold coins minted at Banaras and Bayana after their conquest. On one side of the Ghurid coins was the outline of Laxmi (the Goddess of wealth), and on their reverse a *Devanagari* inscription mentioning Mu'izzuddin's name as the new Sultan, *Mahamada bini Sama*.<sup>12</sup>

The dynastic change in the Lahore-Delhi appanage in 1210 A.D.



also affected Banaras. The deaths of Mu'izzuddin and Qutbuddin created analogous sets of problems in their respective domains as the dilemma after their deaths posed by succession crisis. By Qutbuddin's death, the movement towards the further fragmentation of Ghurid patrimony had gathered strength and Banaras and Awadh, which were under the command of the Qutbi slave Qaymaz Rumi, joined Bayana (which was under Tughril), Sindh, Lahore, and Lakhnauti in having little to do with Lahore-Delhi.<sup>13</sup>

Malik Bakhtiyar Khalji, the *muqti* of Kashmandi, went to Awadh and met Malik Husamuddin Aghul Bek, commander of Banaras and Awadh divisions. Impressed by the gallantry of Bakhtiyar, Aghul Bek conferred upon him the *iqtas* of Baghwat and Bhiuli which provided him the base for operations against the neighbouring areas.<sup>14</sup>

Little information is available in contemporary record regarding Iltutmish's hold over Banaras. After his accession to the throne Iltutmish had faced many difficulties created by Amirs and Ghurid Maliks, and had to reduce their revolts against his authority and finally brought under his jurisdiction the different parts of the kingdom including Banaras in 1217-18 A.D.<sup>15</sup> Iltutmish, then, managed to annex different parts of the kingdom, *atraf-i-mamalik*, specially Badaun, Awadh and Banaras, the suburbs (*muzafat*) of Delhi, and the Siwalik territories.<sup>16</sup> Minhaj-i-Siraj reports that Banaras was seized from Qaymaz Rumi, but to this we can also add Awadh was also under Qaymaz's control.<sup>17</sup> The inclusion of Banaras in Iltutmish's territories points that it had been lost to the Hindus in the meantime.<sup>18</sup> Further, it appears that Hindu devotees became prominent during Iltutmish's rule as Shri Vishveshvara temple was constructed during his period.<sup>19</sup>

During the reign of Sultan Razia no new information has been recorded about Banaras, except for the construction of a mosque by her in the vicinity of Vishvanatha temple.<sup>20</sup> In 1265 A.D. Haji Muhammad Idris is said to have been appointed as the governor of Banaras by Balban. He had also constructed a well there and founded a *mohalla* Hajidas.<sup>21</sup>

No further information has been available to us regarding Banaras from 1287 A.D to 1292 A.D. but it is believed that when in 1292 A.D. Ala'uddin Khalji was the governor of Kara-Manikpur, Banaras region was included in his charge and he was assisted by his deputy, Azizuddin.<sup>22</sup> However, R. C. Majumdar doubted the claims, made in Singhana inscription of Ramachandra, Yadava King of Devgiri, that he drove out the Muslims from Banaras and considered this claim evidently without any historical



value.<sup>23</sup> An inscription from the Lal Darwaza mosque at Jaunpur refers to the construction of Padmeshwar temple by Padam Sadhu and Manikan keshawara temple by Vireshvara in 1296 A.D.<sup>24</sup> This evidence suggest that there was no restriction on the construction of temples during this period perhaps the local governors were not fanatical. Pilgrims were also visiting Banaras even from Karnataka, Telingana, Tirhut etc. An inscription of Hoysala King of Karnataka, Narsingha III, dated 1279 A.D. mentions that the King had donated the income of a village (645 *nishq*) for the pilgrimage of Banaras to the people of Karnataka, Telingana, Tulu, Tirhut and Gond etc. for paying *turushkdanda* (*jaziya*) and for offerings to Vereshvara.<sup>25</sup> This shows that still Banaras was famous pilgrimage centre of the Hindus.

During the reign of last Khalji Sultan Mubarak Khalji, Abdur Razzaq was the governor of Banaras.<sup>26</sup> Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq appointed Jamaluddin Ahmad as governor,<sup>27</sup> while Jalaluddin Ahmad, founder of Jalaluddinpura, succeeded Jamaluddin Ahmad as governor.<sup>28</sup> It appears that in 1322 A.D. Banaras was governed from Zafarabad (in Jaunpur). Under his successors, Muhammad bin Tughlaq and Firoz Shah, the authority of the Sultans over Banaras was considerably strengthened.<sup>29</sup>

Ziyauddin was appointed as the governor of Banaras by Firoz Shah Tughluq.<sup>30</sup> During the time of Firoz Shah, Haji Ilyas, ruler of Bengal, sought to extend his power in the west. Being ambitious, he had conquered Sonargaon (Eastern Bengal), large tracts of territory outside Bengal and led forces as far as Chilkalake. Thus, he marched via Banaras to Bahraich on the pretence that he had to pray for his recovery at the famous tomb of Salar Mas'ud Ghazi, as he was suffering from leprosy. It was feared that, on the same pretext, Haji Ilyas might also come to Delhi to pray at the more sacred tomb of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya.<sup>31</sup> He, thus, had given provocations to Firoz Shah on account of his conquests of Tirhut, Bihar and further raids to Banaras, Gorakhpur and Bahraich. Then Firoz Shah decided to undertake an expedition to punish Haji Ilyas in 1353 A.D. Firoz Shah crossed the river Sarju where several chieftains of Awadh joined him. The *Rais* of Tirhut, and the neighbouring regions paid tribute to him. Firoz captured Pandua and Ekdala and finally in a battle Haji Ilyas was defeated in 1354 A.D. Thus, Firoz Shah re-established his authority over Banaras.<sup>32</sup>

In 1394 A.D. Khwaja-i-Jahan, Wazir of Muhammad bin Tughlaq was made incharge of all the territory from Kannauj to Bihar, including Banaras. Title of *Malik-ul-Sharq* (Lord of the East) was also conferred upon him. Later, he carved out an independent kingdom of Jaunpur



which included Banaras.<sup>33</sup> Thus, for some period Banaras remained under the control of the Sharqi Sultans of Jaunpur. But intermittent warfare went on between the Lodis and Sharqis till 1479 A.D. when Bahlul Lodi completely overwhelmed Hussain Shah Sharqi in a series of battles and Hussain Shah had, to finally, flee to Bihar and his entire territory along with Banaras was included into the Delhi Sultanate by Bahlul Lodi. The government of the newly acquired territory was entrusted into the capable hands of Barbak Shah, Bahlul's son. Barbak was neither unable to repress a general rising of the Hindus nor to hold his own against the Sharqi's attempts to recover their lost dominion. Joga, a Hindu chieftain, from Jaund (Bihar), formed a confederacy of Hindu chieftains of these parts and ousted Barbak Shah from Jaunpur in 1487-1488 A.D. Joga was defeated by Sikandar Lodi and Jaunpur was restored to Barbak Shah. Moreover, in 1494 A.D., Hussain Shah Sharqi marched with a large army from Bihar with the rebellious *zamindars* of Jaunpur and adjoining territories. Sikandar Lodi left Jaunpur to fight against him and was joined by Salbahan, son of Rai Bhed of Phaphamau. The combined armies then advanced from Chunar to Banaras and a fierce battle was fought about twenty-five miles east of the city of Banaras. Defeated Hussain Shah fled towards Bengal.<sup>34</sup> Thereafter, Maharaja Bir Singh was appointed by Sikandar Lodi as the governor of Banaras after his conquest of Ghazipur.<sup>35</sup>

Political stability under the Delhi Sultans paved way for cultural enhancement in Banaras. A number of buildings were constructed by the local governors of Delhi Sultans at Banaras. Evidence suggests that not only the Muslim religious structures but the Hindu religious shrines were also constructed in Banaras during the Sultanate period which further suggests that there was no restriction on the construction of temples during this period. Soon after the conquest led by Sultan Mu'izzuddin, orders were given for the construction of mosques.<sup>36</sup> Where as evidence leads us to believe that Shri Vishveshvara temple was constructed during the time of Sultan Iltutmish. It is recorded that one of the famous generous Seth Vastupala had donated one lakh of rupees for the worship of Vishvanatha.<sup>37</sup> An epigraph, dated 1212 A.D., testifies to the erection of a sacrificial post and a pillar of victory by a Sena King of Bengal, Visvarupa, in the middle of Varanasi, designated as *ksetra* (the holy field) of Shiva Visveshvara, the 'Lord of All'.<sup>38</sup>

Razia Sultan, during her short reign, constructed a mosque on the hill of Vishveshvara, known as Razia's mosque.<sup>39</sup> During the thirteenth century sanctuary of Vishveshvara was (re) constructed, a short distance



down the hill in the vicinity of Avimukteshhvara temple.<sup>40</sup> It is evident from an inscription referring to the construction of a temple for the Lord Padmeshvara by Padmasadhu, 'at the gate of Vishveshvara' in 1296 A.D. The inscription is found in the Lal Darwaza Masjid in Jaunpur, which was built in 1447 AD.<sup>41</sup> Jinaprabha Suri also confirms the resurgence of the Vishveshvara temple by distinguishing four districts of Varanasi, one of which was that of Vishvanatha temple.<sup>42</sup>

Jinaprabha Suri, was a famous Jain scholar of the fourteenth century, associated with the court of Muhammad bin Tughluq. He has given a description of Banaras in his work *Vividhtirthakalpa*. Jinaprabha personally visited Banaras and left an eye-witness account. In an analytical approach he had given geographical, religious, education, and economic condition of Banaras. He writes that it is named 'Varanasi' because of two rivers Varna and Asi. He has described the city in a very distinct manner that there were a number of ponds with varieties of flowers. Rogues and ruffians were also numerous there. In contrast to that, prodigious people, like those who excelled in different arts and sciences like metallurgy, mining, astrology, romance, *mantra*-literature resided there. Moreover, the *pandits* (scholars) expert in vocabulary, reason, rationality, figures, and drama also lived there. Experts of anthology (*nimitta-shastra*) and literature were numerous. *Parivirajaka* (confusive), *jatadhari*, *yogis* and Brahmins lived there with equanimity. People from all the four directions and from longitude lived there and spent their time in study of these arts and sciences to satisfy their thirst for learning. He further described that Pandit brothers, Jayaghosha and Vijayaghosa, the experts of Vedas and Rituals also lived there. During this period, Banaras was divided into four parts: *Deva-Varanasi*, where Vishvanatha temple was situated and Jaina Chaturvishati-patta was also worshipped there; *Rajadhani-Varanasi*, where *yavanas* (Muslims) resided; *Madan-Varanasi*; *Vijaya-Varanasi*. There were numerous universal pilgrimages in Banaras.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the description given by Jinaprabha Suri highlights that, during the fourteenth century under the rule of Delhi Sultans, Banaras remained an important religious and cultural centre. This was a centre of education where not only Vedic literature, but different sciences were studied and taught. This was not only a Hindu pilgrimage centre but during the fourteenth century it also emerged as a popular Jain pilgrimage centre as, according to Jinaprabha Suri, seventh Jina Supasharvanatha and twenty-third Jina Pasharvanatha was born there. Also, temple of Pasharvanatha was situated there and in Dev-Varanasi Jaina Chaturvishati-patta was worshipped.<sup>44</sup>



An inscription from the Lal Darwaza masjid at Jaunpur records the construction of Padmeshwara temple in Banaras by Padam Sadhu in 1296 A.D.<sup>45</sup> Another inscription from Banaras also suggest that temple of the Lord Manikanakeshwara was constructed by Vireshvarain 1302 A.D.<sup>46</sup>

An inscription dated 716 A.H. over the wall of a mosque mentions that the tomb of Saiyyid Abdur Razzaq (d. 602A.H./1218 A.D.), *Wali* (governor) of Banaras, appointed by Aibek, was constructed by Mubarak Khalji.<sup>47</sup>

Haji Muhammad Idris, *Wali* of Banaras was known for his welfare works. Prominent among them was the construction of a well. An inscription dated 711 A.H./1311 A.D refers to the construction of a well in *mohalla* Ansarabad of Banaras by Haji Muhammad Idris, during the reign of Balban. This is a double storey stone structure. There are three entrances on each one is inscribed an inscription. *Kalima* and *Ayat-al-Kursi* is also inscribed over the structure. The date mentioned in the inscription says that he had constructed this well after completing his tenure as governor of Banaras.<sup>48</sup>

Haji Idris also contributed to spreading education. While coming back to Banaras after performing Haj, he brought along with him, the copies of the famous works of Shaikh Sa'di, *Gulistan* and *Bostan*, from Shiraz (Iran). He had established a *madrasa* to teach Persian thereafter his return. Thereafter people started taking interest in reading these works and Persian was included into the curriculum.<sup>49</sup>

Jalaluddin Ahmad, founder of Jalaluddinpura, was the *wali* of Banaras during the reign of Sultan Ghiyathuddin Tughlaq is said to have founded many *madrakas*, one of the larger *madrasa* was situated at Jamaluddinpura/Jalalipura in Banaras.<sup>50</sup> Saiyyid Abdul Razzaq (d. 602 A.H./1218 A.D.), who was appointed as *wali* of Banaras by Aibek was also said to have built a *madrasa* in his mosque.<sup>51</sup>

Zia Ahmad was one of the generous governors of Banaras because of his works for public welfare. He had constructed many buildings in Banaras. The *langar-khana* associated with the tomb and *khanqah* of Hazrat Shah Sabir Ali was also constructed by him.<sup>52</sup> An inscription in Persian at the Dargah of Fakhruddin Alvi records that Zia Ahmad built the mosque, with the dome over the vestibule, or outer entrance porch, the reception chamber (a small chamber subordinate to the masjid), the steps of the reservoir/tank, and the encircling wall of the *dargah* of Fakhruddin Alvi in 777 A.H./1375 A.D. during the period of Firoz Shah Tughlaq.<sup>53</sup> Another mosque, completely built of stone, popularly known



as Masjid Chau-khamba is said to have been built by him.<sup>54</sup> Mosque of Shakar-talab was also constructed by him at Banaras.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, an inscription from the mosque of Raj Mandir refers to its construction by Hussain bin Sharf Hussaini, in the memory of a lady, during the governorship of Ziya Ahmad.<sup>56</sup> Similarly another inscription from the Ek-Khamba masjid (Bittu Shaheed) in Bannasi *mohalla* of Banaras refers to the construction of the tomb of Miran Nasir in 779 A.H./1377 A.D. by the son of Ziyauddin, *wali* of Banaras.<sup>57</sup>

During the reign of Delhi Sultans a number of *Sufi* Saints migrated from Central Asia and established themselves in North West part of India particularly Ajmer, Delhi Nagaur and Panipat. When the Delhi Sultanate was left shattered due to the invasion of Timur in 1398 A.D. new kingdoms arose in which Jaunpur was founded by Malik Sarvar.<sup>58</sup> The *Sharqi* Sultans were great patron of learning and mysticism. Having heard of the patronage of Sharqis, the *sufi* saints as well the ologians, craftsmen, scholars migrated towards this kingdom. Now, new centres of mysticism emerged not only in Jaunpur, Kara Manikpur, Zafarabad and Ghazipur but also at Banaras. A number of *khanqahs*, *madrasas* and seminaries were established and learned people as well *Sufis* flocked here. This place became a vibrant centre of cultural activities.<sup>59</sup>

Khwaja Naim Ahmad Kabuli (d. 597 A.H.), associated with Chishti order, came from Kabul to Ajmer and then settled in Banaras. He had established a *madrasa* near his mosque in Banaras. It is believed that it was the first *madrasa* in Banaras which provided proper education in Qur'ān and Hadīth.<sup>60</sup>

Hazrat Makhdoom Tajuddin was the *khalifa* of Shaikh Sharfuddin Yahya Maneri of Bihar. After getting khilafat, he settled down in Banaras. His tomb is, known as *Rauza* Makhdoom Shah, situated at the north of Idgah Laat.<sup>61</sup> Shaikh Maulana Abdullah was the *khalifa* of Syed Ashraf Jahangir Samnani. He reached Banaras from Kachocha on the orders of his Pir.<sup>62</sup> Similarly Maulana Saeed was also the *khalifa* of Syed Ashraf Jahangir Samnani settled at Banaras.<sup>63</sup> Hazrat Shah Noor's tomb is situated at Shakar-talab, Banaras. He was associated with Madaria and Chishti asilsila. He also had affection for the Qadiria silsila.<sup>64</sup> Shaikh Musa (b. 754 A.H.) was associated with the Firdausi order. He was the son of Shaikh Azizullah Yemeni, who came from Yemen and settled down in Banaras.<sup>65</sup>

Ramananda, teacher of Kabir, came to Banaras at the age of 12 for education and settled here. Though he was a Brahmin but was against the rigidity of the Hindu rituals. He was inclined towards Islamic



concepts. He admitted disciples from all castes including Muslims. Ramananda and his disciples preached Bhakti in the vernacular language of the people and refrained from using Sanskrit, the language of the learned in those times.<sup>66</sup>

The most renowned Bhakti saint was Kabir (born in 1440 A.D.).<sup>67</sup> In course of his wanderings he came into contact at Banaras with many Sufis and saints.<sup>68</sup> His teachings were directed to the attainment of two main objectives: inward spirituality to exclusion of outward ritualism, and the conciliation between Hinduism and Islam. He believed in one formless God and rejected scriptures of both faiths, emphasizing the unity of God, path of love, devotion and *bhakti*. He was the first bhakti saint who tried to remove the discrepancies of the society of Banaras. Being a social reformer he tried to bring about unity among the Hindus and Muslims.<sup>69</sup> Ravidasa was one from among the twelve disciples of Ramananda. He was born of cobbler parents in 1471 A.D. at Banaras. For his spiritual exercises and for the services of the *sadhus*, he had with great difficulty caused a *math* to be built. Local Brahmins did not like it and complained to the King that the cobbler Ravidasa was polluting all in the name of religion. He was called to the royal court for administering a rebuke but because his spirituality and divine love impressed the King the accusations of the Brahmins completely failed.<sup>70</sup>

Dhanna said to have been born in 1415 A.D. In his early life he received education from a Brahman and for higher education he was asked to go to Ramananda in Banaras. Ramananda gladly accepted Dhanna as his disciple though the latter was of a humble birth.<sup>71</sup>

Dharamdas was a devoted worshipper of God but in material images. It is said that in his youth he once went to Mathura where he met Kabir who dispelled Dharam-Das's wrong ideas of God and made him settle in the love and devotion of the Supreme God. The conversation of the two has been recorded in a work named the *Amar-sukh-nidhan*. But Kabir met Dharamdas again in Banares where he convinced the latter about the futility of image-worship. Along with Dharamdas his wife, the eldest son Churamanidasa also accepted the teachings of Kabir. Dharamdas was a wealthy merchant; giving away his riches he entered his spiritual life.<sup>72</sup>

The founder of Vallabha sect, Vallabhacharya was a prominent saint of Krishna cult of Vaishnavism, born in Banaras in 1479 A.D. His father belonged to Tilangana and he was born at the time when his father was on pilgrimage to Banaras along with his family. After getting his education he returned back to his homeland but soon came back to



north India and settled at Vrindavan. He married with a Brahmin girl of Banaras. Vallabhacharya was the author of a number of works in Sanskrit and Brijbhasha, *Subodhini* and *Siddhant Rahasya* being the prominent ones. He spent his life at Banaras and died here in 1531 A.D. His followers started worship of the deities of Radha and Krishna with all possible pomp and show.<sup>73</sup>

Right from ancient to the medieval period, Banaras has been one of the centres of higher Hindu learning.<sup>74</sup> Likewise during the Sultanate period, Banaras remained the centre of activity for intellectuals and theologians, which further enhanced its reputation as a cultural centre of religion and education.

Maulana Hasan bin Daud Farooqi (756 A.H.-906 A.H.) belonged to Chisti silsilah. He has written *Marghoob-ul-Taleebin* on the pattern of Qazi Shihabuddin Daulatabadi's work *Irshad*. He had also written a treatise on astrology.<sup>75</sup>

Maulana Azizullah Husamuddin, associated with Suhrawardi order, came to Banaras from Yemen. He wrote *Manaqib-ul-Safiya* and *Goharistan* in Persian in 742 A.H. He was well versed in Persian prose and poetry.<sup>76</sup>

When Muslim rule was established in India, Hindu scholars became eager to know the innermost details of Muslim civilization. A Brahmin of Banaras, named Bhojar, approached Qazi Ruknuddin and learnt from him the art and literature of the Muslims. The Qazi in turn learnt Sanskrit from Bhojar and translated from Sanskrit into Arabic a book called *Hauz-ul-Hayat*.<sup>77</sup>

One of the pious and learned ladies of Banaras was Bibi Raje. She belonged to the family of Syed Talib Ali, *wali* of Banaras. She was married to Sultan Hussain Sharqi of Jaunpur. She is said to have renamed Arabic months for the common women, i.e., *Muharram* was renamed as *Daha*, *Safar* as *teza-tezi*, *Rabi-ul-Awwal* as *Barah-wafaat*, *Rabi-ul-Thani* as *Bade-Pir*, *Jamadi-Awwal* as *Shah-Murad*, *Jamadi-ul-Akhir* as *Khwaja Muinuddin*, *Rajab* as *Mah-i-Rajab*, *Shaban* as *Shab-Barat*, *Ramazan* as *Roza*, *Shawwal* as *id*, *Zil-Qada* as *Khali*, and *Zil-Hajj* as *Bagra-Id*. After her marriage to the Sharqi Sultan, she was given the title of *Malka-i-Sharqia*. She constructed a Jami mosque, a *khanqah* and a *madrassa* at Jaunpur. She had also fixed the stipends and scholarships for the teachers and students of her *madrassa*.<sup>78</sup>

The above details explain that in the early medieval period Banaras had been passed from one ruler to another but finally after the Ghurid conquest it remained under the control of the Delhi Sultans. Authority of

the Sultans over eastern conquered region, made Banaras an important centre of politics and culture. Many religious as well as secular buildings including mosques, temples, tombs, wells and *madrasas* were constructed. Its importance as a place of learning and religion was maintained by many Sufis and Bhakti saints, philosophers and reformers by their spiritual preaching the message of love and devotion like Ramananda, Kabir, and Vallabhacharya. Besides spirituality, the Sufis of different *silsilahs* (orders) enriched the literary world by compiling works on Sufism. Thus the contribution of Sufis and Bhakti saints made Banaras a place of composite culture. This syncretic culture was further cemented by construction of mosques and temples, both, during the Sultanate period.

### Notes and References

1. Bayhaq., *Tarikh-i-Bayhaqi*, ed. Qasim Ghani and Ali Akbar Fayyaz, Tehran, 1945, p. 402; Mohammad Habib, and Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, (ed.), *Comprehensive History of India*, Vol. V, New Delhi, 1982, p. 136.
2. Hasan Nizami, , *Taj-ul-Ma'athir*, ed. Syed Amir Hasan Abidi, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 154-168; Eng. tr. Bhagwat Saroop, Delhi, 1998, pp. 143-173; Elliot & Dowson, *History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vol. II, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 222-224; Minhaj, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, ed. Abd al-Hai, Calcutta, 1864, p. 139-140; Eng. tr. Major Henry George Raverty, New Delhi, 1970, Vol I, pp. 515-516; R. C Majumdar and A.D. Pusalkar (eds), *The Struggle for Empire*, Bombay, 1959, p. 119. It is surprising that popular beliefs assign Muslim governors of Banaras even before the Ghurid conquest, even to the days of Gahadavala Kings. It mentions that Gobindpura Kahan *mohalla* was built by Dahl Khan during the reign of Gobind Chand, Husainpura *mohalla* by Husain Khan, son of Dahl Khan during the period of Bijai Chand, and Garbasai-tola by Saiyid Talib Ali, who held Banaras during the reign of Jaichand Gahadavala of Kannaj. See H. R. Neville, *Benares A Gazetteer*, District Gazetteer of the United Provinces of Agra and Audh, Allahabad, 1909, p. 190, Salamullah Siddiqui, *Banaras ketareekhi Maqbare*, Varanasi, 1994, p. 24, Abdus Salam Nomani, *Aathar-i-Banaras*, Banaras, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, 2015, p. 82.
3. Minhaj, *Tabaqat*, Persian, p. 147; Habib & Nizami, *Comprehensive History of India*, p. 172; A. B. M. Habibullah, *Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, 3rd Edition, Allahabad, 1976, p. 53.
4. Minhaj, *Tabaqat*, p. 145; Eng. tr., p. 545, n5.
5. Habib & Nizami, *Comprehensive History of India*, p. 168.
6. Nomani, *Aathar-i-Banaras*, p. 106, Neville, *Benares*, p. 190, Fisher, F.H and Hewett, J.P., *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Provinces of India*, Vol. XIV, Benares, Allahabad, 1884, p. 132; Esha Basanti Joshi, *Varanasi: Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers*, Allahabad, 1965, p. 44; Dr.



- Motichandra, *KashikaItihaas*, Bombay, 1962, p. 189. He is appeared to have lived in Banaras till his death and his tomb, known as 'Shahi Mazar', is still to be seen in Jamaluddin Pura Mohalla. See, Fisher, F.H. and Hewett, J.P., p. 132.
7. Habib & Nizami, *Comprehensive History of India*, p. 169; A.B.M. Habibullah, *Foundation of Muslim Rule*, pp. 55-56; R. C. Majumdar and A.D. Pusalkar (eds), *The Struggle for Empire*, Bombay, 1959, p. 132.
  8. Salamullah Siddiqui, *Banaras ke Tareekhi Maqbare*, Varanasi, 1995, p. 27; Neville, *Benares*, p. 190; Fisher, F.H. and Hewett, J.P., p. 132; Esha Basanti Joshi, *Varanasi: Gazetteer*, p. 44; Motichandra, *KashikaItihaas*, p. 189.
  9. See 'Belkahara Pillar Inscription', No. II:5 and 'Machchlishahr Copper Plate Inscription' translated by Pushpa Prasad, *Sanskrit Inscriptions of Delhi Sultanate* (1191-1526 A. D.), Delhi, 1990, pp. 56-57, 58-70; *Epigraphica Indica*, Vol. X, Calcutta, 1910, pp. 96-100; Sunil Kumar, *Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate*, New Delhi, 2007, p. 112.
  10. See inscription number II: 9 'Jaunpur Brick inscription', translated by V.S. Agrawala, See Pushpa Prasad, *Sanskrit Inscriptions of Delhi Sultanate*, pp. 78-79; Sunil Kumar, *Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 113.
  11. See inscription no. II: 11 'Mahoba Fort Copper-Plate Inscription', translated by Pushpa Prasad in *Sanskrit Inscriptions of Delhi Sultanate*, pp. 80-89; Sunil Kumar, *Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 113.
  12. Sunil Kumar, *Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate*, pp. 101-102; John S. Deyell, *Living Without Silver*, pp. 195-206. Hasan Nizami also mentions minting of *dinars* and *dirhams* after the conquest of Banaras. See *Taj-ul-Ma'athir*, p. 175; Eng. tr., p. 171; Elliot & Dowson, *History of India*, Vol. II. p. 223.
  13. Sunil Kumar, *Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 131.
  14. Minhaj, *Tabaqat*, p. 147; Eng. tr. pp. 549-551; *Comprehensive History of India*, p. 172.
  15. Minhaj, *Tabaqat*, p. 171; Eng. tr., p. 608; Esha Basanti Joshi, *Varanasi: Gazetteer*, p. 45; Elliot & Dowson, *History of India*, Vol. II, p. 324; Sir Wolseley Haig (ed.), *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. III, Cambridge, 1928, pp. 57-58; Habib & Nizami, *Comprehensive History of India*, p. 208; R. C. Majumdar and A.D. Pusalkar (eds), *The Struggle for Empire*, p. 132.
  16. Minhaj, *Tabaqat*, p. 171; Sunil Kumar, *Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 140; Habibullah, *Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, p. 77.
  17. Minhaj, *Tabaqat*, Vol. I, pp. 433, 452; Sunil Kumar, *Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate*, pp. 140-141.
  18. Minhaj, *Tabaqat*, pp. 171, 179; A.B.M. Habibullah, *Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, p. 86.
  19. Rajshekhar Suri, *Prabandha Kosha*, edited by Jina Vijaya, Calcutta, 1935, Appendix I, Calcutta, 1935, p. 132; Quoted by Motichandra, *KashikaItihaas*, p. 190.
  20. Hans Bakker, 'Construction and Reconstruction of Sacred Space in Varanasi', *NUMEN*, Vol. 43, Brill, Leiden), 1996, p. 42; D.L. Eck, *Banaras: City of Light*, Princeton, 1982, p. 133.
  21. Nomani, *Aathar-i-Banaras*, p. 108; Salamullah Siddiqui, *Banaras ke Tareekhi Maqbare*, p. 28; Neville, *Benares*, p. 191; Joshi, *Varanasi: Gazetteer*, p. 45.



22. Joshi, *Varanasi: Gazetteer*, p. 45; According to Nomani, Ala'uddin appointed Azizuddin as the wali of Banaras in 1296 A.D. See, *Aathar-i-Banaras*, p. 110.
23. R. C. Majumdar and A.D. Pusalkar (eds), *The Struggle for Empire*, p. 194.
24. A. Fuhrer, *The Sharqi Architecture of Jaunpur*, Calcutta, 1866, p. 51.
25. *Epigraphia Carnatica: Record of the Archaeological Survey of India*, Calcutta, 1912, Vol. XIV, No. 298, pp. 71-78.
26. Nomani, *Aathar-i-Banaras*, p. 111.
27. Nomani, *Aathar-i-Banaras*, p. 114.
28. F. H. Fisher and J.P. Hewett, p. 132; Neville, *Benares*, p. 191; Joshi, *Varanasi: Gazetteer*, p. 45; Salamullah Siddiqui, *Banaras ke tareekhi maqbare*, p. 29.
29. Joshi, *Varanasi: Gazetteer*, p. 45.
30. Nomani, *Aathar-i-Banaras*, p. 114.
31. Anonymous, *Sirat-i-Firozshahi*, Facsimile edition, Khuda Bakhsh Public Oriental Library, Patna, 1999, pp 28-33; Habib & Nizami, *Comprehensive History of India*, p. 583; Jamini Mohan Banerjee, *History of Firuz Shah Tughluq*, Delhi, 1967, p. 29. On his return from Bahraich Haji Ilyas is reported to have remarked, 'The expedition that I led to Banaras and the pilgrimage that I made to the mortuary at Bahraich....had I gone the other way and visited Delhi and had I paid my reverence to Shaikh-ul-Islam Nizamuddin Auliya, none would have made a stand against me. But my concern and the solicitude for the welfare of the inhabitants of Delhi stood in my way and therefore I did not proceed further and returned from the grave of Sipah Salar Mas'ud.' See, *Sirat*, p. 36.
32. Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, ed. Calcutta, 1911, p. 229; Hindi tr., *Tughlaq Kaleen Bharat*, Vol. II, 343; Joshi, *Varanasi: Gazetteer*, p. 45; Habib & Nizami, *Comprehensive History of India*, pp. 583-583; R.C. Jauhri, *Firoz Tughluq (1351-1388 A.D.)*, Agra, 1968, pp. 45-51; Nomani, *Aathar-i-Banaras*, p. 118.
33. Yahya Sirhindi, *Tarikh-i-Mubarakshahi*, ed. Muhammad Hidayat Husain, Asiatic Society Calcutta, 1931, p. ; Eng. tr., H. Beveridge, Delhi, 1992, p. 257; Joshi, *Varanasi: Gazetteer*, p. 46; Nomani, *Aathar-i-Banaras*, pp. 119-120.
34. Nizamuddin, *Tabaqat*, p. 319; Rizvi, *Uttar Timur Kaleen Bharat*, Vol. I, p. 214; Elliot & Dowson, *History of India*, Vol. V, p. 95; Neville, *Benares*, p. 191; Joshi, *Varanasi: Gazetteer*, p. 47.
35. Nomani, *Aathar-i-Banaras*, p. 127.
36. Hasan Nizami, *Taj-ul-Ma'athir*, p. 174.
37. *Prabandha Kosha*, Appendix I, Calcutta, 1935, p. 132; Quoted by Motichandra, *KashikaItihaas*, p. 190.
38. *EpigraphicaIndica*, Vol. XLIII, p. 322; For more details about Visvarupa in Banaras, see, Hans Bakker, 'Construction and Reconstruction of Sacred Space in Varanasi', *NUMEN*, Vol. XLIII, Brill, Leiden), 1996, p. 42.
39. Hans Bakker, 'Construction and Reconstruction of Sacred Space in Varanasi', p. 42; D. L. Eck, *Banaras: City of Light*, Princeton, 1982, p. 133.
40. D. L. Eck, *Banaras: City of Light*, Princeton, 1982, p. 133.
41. A. Fuhrer, *Sharqi Architecture of Jaunpur*, Calcutta, 1889, p. 51; Hans Bakker, 'Construction and Reconstruction of Sacred Space in Varanasi', p. 42.
42. Jinaprabha Suri, *Vividhtirthakalpa*, Jina Vijaya (ed), Shantiniketan, 1934, p. 74;



- Hans Bakker, 'Construction and Reconstruction of Sacred Space in Varanasi', p. 42.
43. Jinaprabha Suri, *Vividh-tirthakalpa*, pp. 72-74. Modern scholar Motichandra tries to identify the four divisions of Varanasi. According to him 'Deva-Varanasi' was, most probably, the southern Banaras where presently Vishvanatha temple is situated. Second was 'Rajdhani-Varanasi' where Muslim governing class resided. It was possibly Adampur and Jaitpur area of Banaras. 'Vijaya-Varanasi' was perhaps not a part of main modern city of Banaras. See Motichandra, *Kashi ka Itihaas*, p. 195; Third division of Banaras was 'Madan-Banaras'. This is in Zamania tehsil of Ghazipur. Mughal emperor Babur is said to have once encamped at 'Madan-Banaras'. During the reign of Akbar 'Madan-Banaras' was renamed as 'Zamania', after Akbar's officer Ali Quli Khan Khan-i-Zaman and now the headquarters of Zamania pargana of Ghazipur. It was in Akbar's sarkar of Ghazipur. For details see, Babur, *Babur-nama*, Eng. tr. A.S. Beveridge, Part II, London, 1922, p. 658.
  44. Jina Prabhasuri, *Vividh-tirthakalpa*, pp. 72-74.
  45. Fuhrer, *Sharqi Architecture*, p. 51.
  46. For details see, M. M. Nagar, 'Two Inscriptions in the Bharat Kala Bhawan, Benares', *Journal of United Provinces Historical Society*, Part. I, April, 1936, pp. 19-22.
  47. For the details of the inscription, see Nomani, *Aathar-i-Banaras*, p. 112; Salamullah Siddiqui, *Banaras ke Tareekhi Maqbare*, p. 26.
  48. Nomani, *Aathar-i-Banaras*, p. 109-110; Salamullah Siddiqui, *Banaras ke Tareekhi Maqbare*, p. 28; Neville, *Benares*, p. 191; Joshi, *Varanasi: Gazetteer*, p. 45. A mohallah, Hajidas, named after him also exists in Banaras. His tomb is still seen in mohallah Qazzaqpura. See, Fisher, F.H. and Hewett, J.P., pp. 132-133.
  49. Nomani, *Aasar-i-Banaras*, p. 108; Salamullah Siddiqui, *Banaras ke Tareekhi Maqbare*, p. 28; Ishtiyag Hussain, *Kashika Muslim Samaj*, New Delhi, 2000, p. 51.
  50. Neville, *Benares*, p. 190; Fisher, F.H. and Hewett, J.P., *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Provinces of India*, Vol. XIV, p. 132; Joshi, *Varanasi: Gazetteer*, p. 44; Motichandra, *Kashika Itihaas*, p. 18.
  51. Salamullah Siddiqui, *Banaras ke Tareekhi Maqbare*, p. 26.
  52. Nomani, *Aathar-i-Banaras*, p. 114.
  53. A. Fuhrer, *Monumental Antiquities*, p. 201; *Gazetteer*, pp. 45-46; Abdus Salam Nomani, *Tazkirah-i-Mashaikh-i-Banaras*, Benares, 2011, p. 20; For the details of the inscription, see Nomani, *Aathar-i-Banaras*, pp. 115-116.
  54. Nomani, *Aathar-i-Banaras*, pp. 116-117.
  55. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
  56. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
  57. Nomani, *Aathar-i-Banaras*, p. 97.
  58. Mohammad Qasim Farishta, *Tarikh-i-Farishta*, tr. J. Briggs, vol. IV, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, New Delhi-1981, p. 213; M.M. Saeed, *The Sharqi Sultanat of Jaunpur: A Political and Cultural History*, University of Karachi, Pakistan 1972, pp. 32-33.
  59. Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabqat-i-Akbari*, ed. Barun De. Vol. III, Delhi, 1932, pp.



- 449-450; Abul Hasanat Nadvi, *Hindustan hi Qadeem Islami Darsgahen* (Urdu), Amritsar-1341 A.H.,
60. Nomani, *Tazkira-i-Mashaikh-i-Banaras*, p. 22; Salamullah Siddiqui, *Banaras ke Tareekh-i-Maqbare*, p. 25.
  61. Nomani, *Tazkira-i-Mashaikh-i-Banaras*, p. 24.
  62. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
  63. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
  64. For details see *Tazkirat-ul-Hameed* quoted by Nomani in *Tazkira-i-Mashaikh-i-Banaras*, pp. 25-26.
  65. Nomani, *Tazkira-i-Mashaikh-i-Banaras*, pp. 27-28.
  66. A.L. Srivastav, *Medieval Indian Culture*, Jaipur, 1964, pp. 45-46; Yusuf Hussain, *Glimpse of Medieval India*, Asia Publishing House, 1957, p. 13.
  67. Kshitimohan Sen, *Medieval Mysticism of India*, London, 1930, p. 89.
  68. *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, p. 186.
  69. Srivastava, *Medieval Indian Culture*, p. 46; M. A. Mc Caulliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Part III, OUP, 1909, p. 163.
  70. Kshitimohan Sen, *Medieval Mysticism of India*, pp. 79-82; Nomani, *Aathar-i-Banaras*, pp. 130-131.
  71. Kshitimohan Sen, *Medieval Mysticism of India*, p. 83.
  72. *Ibid.*, pp. 106-107.
  73. *Ibid.*, p. 51; Srivastav, *Medieval Indian Culture*, pp. 52-53.
  74. Srivastav, *Medieval Indian Culture*, p. 89.
  75. For details see, Waseem Ahmad, *Tazkira-i-Ulama-i-Banaras*, Banaras, 1990, pp. 66-70.
  76. Nomani, *Tazkira-i-Mashaikh-i-Banaras*, p. 27. For more details of his work see Waseem Ahmad, *Tazkira-i-Ulama-i-Banaras*, pp. 206-207.
  77. R. L. Verma, 'The Growth of Greco-Arabian medicine in Medieval India', *Indian Journal of History of Science*, Vol. V, No. II, June, 1970, pp. 348-349. Qazi Ruknuddin Samarqandi (d. 1218 A.D.) was a scholar and a poet. Considering his scholarship, Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji appointed him the Qazi of Lakhnauti. In Bengal, he developed contacts with the *yogis* (Hindu ascetics) and learned Sanskrit. Then, he translated into Persian a well-known Sanskrit *yoga* work *Amritkund* to acquaint the Muslims with Indian branch of knowledge and named it *Hauz-ul-Hayat*. It seems that this work was also rendered by him in Arabic under the title *Mirat-ul-Ma'ani fi Idrak-i-Alam-i-Insani*. Ruknuddin Samarqandi himself admitted that Bhoj, a local Brahman, assisted him in this project of translation. It was introducing work on *yoga* into Islamic literature. See Manuscripts preserved in Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, *Hauz-ul-Hayat*-AMU. Abd. 475; *Mirat-ul-Ma'ani* AMU. Jawahir 6; Nabi Hadi, *A History of Indo-Persian Literature*, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 52-54; Nabi Hadi, *Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature*, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 519-520; Rashid, *Society and Culture*, pp. 171-172; *Journal of Pakistan Historical Society*, Vol. I, 1953, pp. 46-52. This work was again translated by a sufi, Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus Shattari of Gwalior (d. 970 A.H./1562 A.D.) who named his version as *Bahar-ul-Hayat*.
  78. Nomani, *Aathar-i-Banaras*, p. 125; Salamullah Siddiqui, *Banaras ke Tareekh-i-Maqbare*, p. 31.